

# Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

## Meeting 85

Meeting Record

5-6 February 2025

Hilton Esplanade, Cairns

A/g Chair: David Brewer

Note all meeting papers and records are available on  
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Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

# Agenda Item 1 Meeting Administration

## 1.1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, welcome and apologies

The 85th meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was opened at 9:20am AEDT, on Wednesday 5 February 2025.

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair who acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which all participants were on, and paid respect to elder's past, present and emerging. The Chair acknowledged the importance of treating one another with respect during the meeting and honouring the different voices and views.

A prayer was offered by Mr Allan Passi.

Dr Welsford suggested considering the updated terms of reference at this point in the meeting, so they could be used. AFMA explained that this meeting requires TSSAC to consider and finalise their recommended changes, however the TOR need to be endorsed by the PZJA in order to be adopted.

## 1.2 Adoption of agenda

The TSRA requested an additional agenda item for discussion in other business, to explain the process for developing the budgets for research. This includes understanding how research priorities are identified and accepted by the TSSAC for release in the call for research, and how researchers who are invited to apply are identified.

## 1.3 Declarations of Interest

The Chair advised members and observers, that as provided in PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 (FMP1), all members of the TSSAC must declare all real or potential conflicts of interest related to Torres Strait research, most specifically the agenda items being considered in the current meeting. It was noted that where a direct conflict of interest is determined to exist, the TSSAC may allow the member to continue to participate in the discussions relating to the matter but may also determine that, having made their contribution to the discussions, the member should retire from the meeting for the remainder of the discussions on that issue.

Each TSSAC member confirmed or updated their interests/roles held that may pose conflicts (see Table 1). No members had any specific conflicts to declare against this agenda.

Members left in groups (scientific members, Traditional Inhabitant (TIB) industry members, Government members), and remaining members agreed there were no conflicts that needed to be considered during the meeting for any member.

**Table 1.** Declarations of interest for members and observers, including a list of their positions and associations which have potential to create a conflict of interest. A note is also included as to whether each member has any specific conflict related to the TSSAC 84 agenda declared by them.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Mr David Brewer	A/g Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fisheries consultant.</li><li>Previous co-investigator of TSSAC and FRDC funded project to implement a monitoring program for</li></ul>

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
		<p>non-commercial fisheries in Torres Strait. No other relevant interests in Torres Strait.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Chair, PZJA FFRAG.</li> <li>• Current Scientific member, PZJA FFWG.</li> </ul>
Mr Steve Harris	AFMA member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Manager Torres Strait Fisheries.</li> <li>• No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Ms. Lisa Cocking	Executive Officer (AFMA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Management Officer AFMA.</li> <li>• EO of TSPMAC.</li> <li>• No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Mr. Damian Miley	TSRA Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TSRA hold in trust, on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants, sunset licences for the Finfish Fishery, and hold licences in the TRL and BDM fisheries.</li> <li>• No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Ms Michelle Wenner	QLD Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle Fisheries Manager QDPI</li> <li>• with No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Mr. Tim Skewes	Scientific Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Consultant. Previously employed by CSIRO.</li> <li>• Previous principal scientist and co-investigator for Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) and TSRA funded projects focused on the sea cucumber, tropical rock lobster, finfish and traditional fisheries in Torres Strait.</li> <li>• Previous co-investigator of TSSAC and FRDC funded project to implement a monitoring program for non-commercial fisheries in Torres Strait. No other relevant interests in Torres Strait.</li> <li>• No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Dr Dirk Welsford	Scientific Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee of Environment Information Australia within DCCEEW.</li> <li>• No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
A prof. Natasha Stacey	Scientific Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher at Charles Darwin University. Previously a PI on one TSSAC and FRDC co-funded project currently underway.</li> </ul>

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Dr Steve Newman	Scientific Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fisheries Scientist at Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA).</li> <li>No specific conflicts declared against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Mr Charles David	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member of Zenadth Kes Fisheries.</li> <li>Member of RIMREP.</li> <li>Usually a TIB licence holder, not currently active.</li> </ul>
Mr Robert See Kee	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zenadth Kes Fisheries member, TSIRC employee.</li> <li>No specific conflicts against this agenda.</li> </ul>
Mr. Allan Passi	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>member of Zenadth Kes Fisheries.</li> <li>TIB licence holder.</li> </ul>
Mr Torenzo Elisala	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TIB licence holder, member ZKF, member of fishers on Dauan, TSIRC councillor. PBC chair. Member GBK and ML.</li> </ul>
Frank Loban	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director ZK Fisheries</li> <li>TIB licence</li> </ul>
Ned David	Observer Malu Lamar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair of Malu Lamar and director cape and TS PBC for sea determination in east coast of cape.</li> </ul>
Quinten Hirakawa	TSRA observer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TIB licence holder.</li> </ul>

#### 1.4 TSSAC 83 Meeting record and actions arising from past TSSAC meetings

The TSSAC noted the meeting 84 record, which was ratified out of session.

The TSSAC discussed the progress against actions arising, the following main points were noted:

- Action 84.9 – “TSRA and AFMA to confirm wording from the PZJA standing committee around integration of TEK and provide details to the TSSAC secretariat so words can be added to the TOR if required.”** The TSSAC agreed that there is no need to include words in the TOR relating to TEK. TSRA and Traditional Inhabitant Industry members, however, requested a discussion in ‘Other Business’ relating to how traditional owners are able to be involved in the early stages of research priority planning, to ensure they are able to

recommend researchers or topics they feel are suitable to complete research and include relevant research aspirations of Traditional Owners.

- Mr Charles David noted that he wants this issue to be a higher priority on the agenda. He had concerns that some research projects, such as TRL, seem to have a scope which is tailored towards specific applicants.
- AFMA explained the process by which Torres Strait fisheries research priorities are developed. That being, RAGs formulate the research priorities for individual fisheries, and then TSSAC consider all of these and decide which ones should be released in a call for research. Traditional Inhabitant industry members are on each committee and give feedback into the research priorities at each stage. AIATSIS were consulted on this TSSAC consultative process and considered it was a good process noting the consultation at all stages of the process.
- Mr Charles David questioned how unique research priorities that communities may want put forward can be considered, if they don't come through a RAG.

**ACTION: AFMA and TSRA to discuss the process in which the TSSAC research tender process is completed, to consider how Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people could suggest projects and possible research candidates for research.**

- Dr Dirk Welsford, scientific member on the committee acknowledged the difficulties with getting experts for this type of work within Australia, and also the limited funding available, which creates difficulties in being able to pursue research priorities that are more innovative, and outside of the core baseline research required to keep Torres Strait fisheries open. Further, there is limited funding to support more paid capacity development in communities during research, or developing communities to undertake their own research, due to funding restrictions.
- Mr Ned David, meeting observer from Malu Lamar was of the view that we need to have a single point of accountability for all Torres Strait research to ensure funds are well used. This is beyond AFMA and TSRA. Malu Lamar would like to be in a position where they commission or determine what research is completed, and that they own the outcomes of research. However, they are still unsure of how that would be designed. Malu Lamar would like to see more conversations around this.
- Malu Lamar considers it is TSRA's responsibility to ensure their funding is going towards capacity development for communities, and that research achieves this. Mr Ned David also noted the improvements in research processes and engagement in recent years in Torres Strait.
- Mr Crispian Ashby, observer from FRDC joined the meeting, and offered some information around FRDC funding. The public good funding is Federal funding untied to any one jurisdiction. However, there is also funding that is a 1-1 match between industry contributions and Commonwealth funding through FRDC. There is currently a gap with no Torres Strait GVP contribution (0.25% of GVP). If this GVP contribution is made, FRDC would match this.
- **ACTION 84.10 – *“TSRA to consider the best processes for managing community requests for developmental fisheries and research priority ideas and present a short paper to the***

***next meeting. Following the paper presentation, the TSSAC can consider whether some words should be placed into the research plan to provide guidance on this matter.”***

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that TSRA develop a discussion paper, setting out the suggested process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to put forward possible research priorities, particularly for fisheries not managed by the RAGs and working groups.

**ACTION: TSRA to develop a discussion paper, setting out the suggested process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to put forward possible research priorities, particularly for fisheries not managed by the RAGs and working groups.**

This recommendation was made noting the following discussion:

- TSRA noted they see a useful way forward would be for each possible research project to be considered on a case-by-case basis. TSRA see there being several avenues in which Torres Strait community members could bring their research request through:
  - The TSRA fisheries Liaison officer.
  - Approaching ZK Fisheries or ZK Fisheries may have their own priorities.
  - TSRA Fisheries Advisory Committee members.
- TSRA suggested this may be a body of work they complete outside of the TSSAC, rather than it being a TSSAC paper.
- AFMA noted that it is TSRA's decision how they wish to deal with this matter, noting they are members on all committees.

## **Agenda Item 2 Reports**

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### *Agenda Item 2.1 PZJA agency updates*

PZJA agencies provided updates on major work and developments within their agencies.

#### **AFMA update**

The following points were noted in the AFMA update:

- Natalie Couchman has left the role of Senior Management Officer for the Hand Collectables fisheries and Chris Boon, the Senior Management Officer for the Finfish fishery is on extended secondment.
- This is leaving AFMA short on staff so it's a bit more challenging to get through our responsibilities.
- The Black Teatfish (BTF) fishery will be opening again in March 2025, with sampling happening outside of TSSAC through the AFMA scientific observer program. There was a desire to have short term use of VMS for the fishery opening, however, it has not eventuated for this season due to different views on this method.

- There will be a PZJA teleconference next week, which will consider decisions around a proposed under catch carry over provision for BDM as well as consideration of which empirical harvest control rule will be used for TAC setting in the TRL fishery.
- Mr Charles David commented that he had concerns with the TRL cross endorsement licence condition discussions and wished it to go before the PZJA. AFMA acknowledged that the TRLRAG is the forum to discuss this, and it has already been discussed.

### **QDPI Update**

The following points were noted in the QDPI update:

- QDPI have been in discussion regarding WTO's, and received another 3 year WTO for the otter trawl fishery, with conditions around bycatch and no scallop fishing.
- The WTO for the BDM fishery has been negotiated for 3 years, with a range of conditions in place including TACs and minimum size limits on a number of species.
- They are also renegotiating a rock lobster WTO for 10 years (LENS).
- There have been heatwave declarations for Northern Australia, and a severe weather event response plan has been triggered due to heat stress and flooding. They are now in discussion around any necessary management actions for coral and aquarium fisheries.
- The TSSAC were provided a link for seeing real-time heatwave stress information for different regions in the Great Barrier Reef area.  
[https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/product/5km/index\\_5km\\_dhw.php](https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/product/5km/index_5km_dhw.php)
- Mr Ned David asked whether there is a shared point for research in Torres Strait, beyond what is taken care of by TSSAC. Dr Welsford acknowledged that the repository for research tends to be scientific journals, but we have no one data base for Torres Strait research.
- The TSSAC acknowledged the process on the Torres Strait climate modelling project, which is in its early stages, and has a working group which meets four times a year, chaired by the TSRA fisheries portfolio member. TSRA will commence rolling out information to communities once information starts to come in from the project, to get feedback on what is being seen.
- Mr Tim Skewes asked how QDPI were able to negotiate with DCCEEW regarding WTO conditions. QDPI explained that there were a range of factors, including providing evidence to support changes to conditions, advocating for economic, industry or social or community benefits of the fishery.

### **TSRA Update**

The following points were noted in the TSRA update:

- TSRA Board members were elected through the Australian Electoral Commission and their induction starts next week.
- The TSRA Chair, once elected, will decide if portfolio members will be appointed.
- TSRA are currently working with AFMA to identify the best process for nomination of TIB industry members on PZJA Advisory Committees. Once members are elected, there will be a training workshop to prepare them for meeting membership roles.
- The TSRA Crown of Thorns project is still underway.

## ***Agenda Item 2.2 Warrior Reef sandfish survey - project presentation***

Vincent Raoult from the project team for the Torres Strait warrior reef sandfish survey provided a short presentation to demonstrate the technology being used for the survey in operation. The Chair

noted that the presentation was just to show the techniques in use, not to discuss outcomes on results, as the project team are yet to complete the analysis. The following main points were noted about the survey and effectiveness of the technology:

- 30 times more area was covered than the 2010 survey (excluding drone data which was additional to this and a very large area – this is used mostly for habitat mapping).
- The project team did not need to swap to other methods (reef walking), as the technology was effective, and many different species were visible.
- The lama community member who was planned to assist them on the researcher had to pull out, and another member stepped in. The project team worked with them to show them footage, and confirm whether what they were seeing seemed suitable for identifying and seeing species. The lama member confirmed it seemed effective as they could see sandfish in the video.
- The project team confirmed that the only difference in the survey methods, was that they are not looking at point transects as with historic surveys.
- The results allow them to link the species they are finding and where, with habitat and bathymetry, which helps to do analysis to understand available habitat in the region.
- Mr Ashby asked if there would be manual reads of data to check biases for machine readings. Mr Raoul explained that machine learning is not being used for this project, and all data will be analysed manually by two people, doing count, identify and measure the sea cucumbers, and also place each specimen on the map using GPS coordinates, which can then be put into a transect. If the two analysts have any discrepancies, they can compare and discuss the footage.
- The TSSAC noted that given the data is recorded, another analysis could be completed in the future by another expert for auditing, or to simply look at results for other purposes.
- Mr Tim Skewes asked about the results of other surveys completed by the researchers, where the project team used different methods in the same area. Dr Raoul explained that they put the aerial drone, ROV and snorkellers across the same transect to see the differences in footage, and this has been recently published. The assemblages seen overall show no significant difference between methods for in-water and ROV. They see slightly more sea cucumbers overall in the snorkelling data, however, he noted it is hard to drive an ROV over a fixed transect, and when this is considered, they performed well. Overhangs of habitat components such as seagrass or algae with a sea cucumber underneath is one of the places that you would find a difference between in water and ROV results. Dr Raoul also noted that the drone is mainly used for habitat identification, more than species identification and measurement.
- The project team acknowledged that despite decreases in visibility in the middle of the trip, they could still analyse the data sufficiently.
- Mr Charles David discussed the TEK shared by himself and other lama community about the fishery and species in planning of the surveys. This includes their recommendations around completing the surveys during early morning and late evening, as that is the time the fishers see more sea cucumber around. Dr Raoul noted that they needed to complete the surveys at the same time of year and day (10am to 2pm) for this survey for comparison. However,



he also acknowledged they would provide information on time of day and tide times so these effects can be noted in the results.

- AFMA acknowledged that it is good to see the presentation and that there is likely to be valuable data to come out of the project.

## Agenda Item 3 TSSAC Evaluation Criteria

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The TSSAC discussed the process for redeveloping the TSSAC evaluation criteria for assessing project suitability for funding. AFMA worked with the TSSAC scientific members to redraft the criteria based on discussions at TSSAC 84. They attempted to simplify criteria, as well as reduce repetition, and TSSAC are now invited to make comment. The TSSAC secretariat noted that attractiveness and feasibility are no longer outlined as categories, however, all questions under these categories were considered, whether they should be kept, combined with others, or removed, in order to simplify the questions.

The TSSAC discussed criteria number 5. The following main points were discussed:

- Mr Ned David noted that the terminology (Traditional Inhabitant) used in the document is outdated and inappropriate. TSRA explained that the wording within the Torres Strait Fisheries Act is still Traditional Inhabitant, therefore this term needs to be mentioned. However, discussion at the last meeting led members to suggest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander also be referenced, to encompass all. Mr Ned David acknowledged that this language needs to be changed and reforms are required. AFMA and TSRA agreed it isn't appropriate language in this age, and it does need changing.

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that criteria 5 should add "in the region" after Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to acknowledge supporting and engaging those still residing in the region.

**ACTION: TSSAC executive officer to update assessment criteria 5 to add "in the region" after Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to acknowledge supporting and engaging those still residing in the region.**

The TSSAC discussed the ranking of projects, and asked about 1-10 rankings instead of the current method. The secretariat noted the current system was chosen, to simplify from a more complex number system previously used. The TSSAC Chair noted that the justifications are very important as they provide the context behind the number.

The TSSAC executive officer acknowledged that the 'exceeds' criteria is somewhat ambiguous and could considered being removed. However, the committee agreed to stay with the current rankings.

A/ Prof Natasha Stacey mentioned that criteria 4, 5 and 6 need to reflect the language used in the proposal. Applications request a stakeholder engagement plan and community consultation package, however, different wording is used in these assessment criteria.

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that criteria 4, 5 and 6 be reviewed to ensure it was clear regarding the language used around stakeholder engagement, communication plans and community consultation, and is consistent between research applications and criteria.

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that the TSSAC executive officer and scientific members should do further work to remove more repetition across the new evaluation criteria.

**ACTION: TSSAC executive officer to review criteria 4, 5 and 6 to ensure it was clear regarding the language used around stakeholder engagement, communication plans and community consultation, and is consistent between research applications and criteria.**

**ACTION: TSSAC secretariat and scientific members to further refine evaluation criteria before next funding round.**

## **Agenda Item 4 2025-26 budget and research priorities**

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The TSSAC discussed the TSSAC research budget for the 2025-26 financial year. The following major points were noted and discussed:

- Seven proposals were received in a call for research, one proposal for each scope released.
- There are not any existing multi-year projects that need to be considered for 2025-26 and beyond when considering these projects.
- There is unlikely to be sufficient funding to cover all research, based on past budgets available from AFMA and TSRA.

The TSSAC went on to discuss each research proposal. Generally discussions were had on each proposal, as well as the TSSAC considering the proposal against the TSSAC project evaluation criteria. Details of the discussion on projects is commercial in confidence and cannot be presented in this meeting record.

## 4.8 Prioritization of research

Following these individual discussions on each project, the TSSAC went on to discuss prioritisation of these projects for funding.

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** a priority order for the seven research projects for funding. Once TSSAC funding is finalised, projects are recommended to be funded in this order:

1. TSPF Stock assessment update.
2. Fishery independent survey, stock assessment, and Recommended Biological Catch calculations for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery 2025-2028.
3. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery: Coral trout and Spanish mackerel biological sampling 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28.
4. Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery: unknown project to meet needs of the WTO.
5. Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery: Stock assessment modelling of prickly redfish in the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery.
6. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery: Spanish mackerel stock assessment, including an appraisal of multi-year TAC-setting.
7. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Coral Trout Catch Rate Standardisation.

4.7.2 The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that the finfish biological sampling project be supported for 1 year initially, rather than 3, while the FFRAG complete work in the first year, to provide more detailed advice on how many samples need to be collected, how and where (for spatial representation) to determine the power and requirement for continuing the sampling annually.

4.7.3 The TSSAC **NOTED** that the BDM broadscale survey proposal as presented is not suitable for funding, given both the calibre of the proposal, and uncertainties raised around the cost of the budget compared to its objective to meeting the condition of the WTO recommendation for the fishery.

4.7.4 The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that AFMA engage the HCRAAG, and DCCEEW to further discuss current and new work in the BDM fishery, including the warrior reef surveys, and whether this may have influence on the WTO conditions.

4.7.5 The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** a new BDM scope be developed, if this project is still required following DCCEEW engagement. The proposal should seek a project that is as cost effective as possible in meeting the WTO conditions. This scope should be re-release for project proposals to be assessed at the August 2025 TSSAC meeting.

In making this recommendation, the TSSAC:

- Noted that the TSPF stock assessment project is excellent value for money and low cost, while being important for the fishery. The TSSAC agreed it should be prioritised as 1, purely due to value for money and low cost, not based on fishery importance.

- Noted, the TRL survey and stock assessment project is a very high priority given it is required for setting the TAC for the fishery. However, the also recommended that the TRL harvest strategy be reviewed, to consider other mechanisms for TRL surveys and assessments that may be less financially burdensome.
- Noted that the finfish biological sampling project is the highest priority for the FFAG, and for the fishery. The Spanish Mackerel stock assessment and Coral Trout CPUE standardisation were the next in order.
- Noted the finfish biological sampling project has been running for around 5 years already, and there may be other sampling and assessment regimes that could be sufficient, particularly given the RAG are currently assessing the possibility of multi-year TACs.
- Noted that there is a risk that the applicant for the finfish biological sampling project may not be interested in doing a 1 year project, and there will most likely be fairly significant budget effects if the project is changed to 1 year.
- Noted the BDM broadscale survey was a priority due to the WTO conditions placed on the fishery, rather than being a high priority of the RAG. The Prickly Redfish project was a higher priority for the RAG, as it is the most important species in terms of uncertainty around sustainability.
- Despite not being a high priority of the RAG, AFMA and TSRA as the funding delegates also have interest in the BDM broadscale survey project, as they acknowledge the importance of the BDM fishery into the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as these are developing fisheries, even if effort is currently relatively low.
- Noted that there may be a number of ways AFMA could meet the requirements of the WTO conditions (such as the Warrior Reef survey), aside from the priorities suggested here (BDM broadscale and Prickly Redfish projects), and that conversations with DCCEE had not been further progressed in recent months due to staff shortages.
- Noted that AFMA raised some concerns with delaying this project by another year may just delay the project, that will still be required, next year, with the same budget constraints. AFMA also noted that relying on the Warrior Reef data may not be ideal, giving the illegal fishing occurring on Warrior Reef.
- Recommended that money be set aside for a BDM project, noting the current application was not suitable for funding, and more work may be required by AFMA and the HCRA to develop a new scope to meet the needs of the WTO conditions, in as cost-effective way as possible.
- Noted there was originally one descending view from Mr Passi in supporting the BDM broadscale survey. However, TSRA and TIB members left the room for discussion about this project, and returned in consensus on the importance of research for this fishery, if a reasonable scope and proposal can be developed. TSRA explained that if there is insufficient funding, they may be able to obtain some additional funding if a reasonable application is received.
- Noted that if habitat mapping was included in the scope, which is something that the existing applicants provide in their work, it may increase interest from FRDC for funding support.

**ACTION: AFMA to work with the HCRAAG, and DCCEEW as required, to discuss the current work in the BDM Fisheries that may meet the needs of the WTO condition, and develop a new scope for a project that would meet the requirement of the WTO in the most cost effective way possible.**

## **Agenda Item 7 – Other Business**

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### **7.1 Management of project data and Intellectual Property**

TSSAC noted there was no time to have detailed discussions on management of project data and IP, as raised in agenda item 4. Dr Newman agreed to put together some questions for a discussion paper for tabling at the next meeting. Dr Welsford agreed to assist with this.

**ACTION: Dr Newman and Dr Welsford to put together some questions for a discussion paper for tabling at the next meeting relating to management of data and IP in TSSAC funded research projects.**

### **7.2 TSSAC research application process**

TSSAC agreed that TSRA and AFMA should present an agenda item to the next meeting regarding the procedural framework for undertaking research in Torres Strait. The paper should include discussion around:

- What other avenues are there for more clearly requesting research applicants to consider employment opportunities in projects.
- How can Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal People provide advice on possible research applicants to be included in the TSSAC limited tender process.
- Consider including TSRA in the tender process in future to assist with engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people.

The TSSAC also discussed how employment in projects is managed and noted that PBC's and ML have developed fee schedules that could be used as a guide. If recommendations like this were to go ahead, this information would need to be included in applications, so proponents know to include it in their budgets and methods.

Dr Welsford noted that it may be more efficient for the employment side of TSSAC research to be coordinated, such as through TSRA, in order to have, for example, a pool of possible employees, and also have an understanding of schedule of fees for this work.

### **7.3 Thanks and meeting close**

The TSSAC Executive Officer thanked Mr Brewer for standing in as acting chair for this meeting.

A/ Prof Stacey thanks the executive officer for all their work in all elements of the meeting preparation and operation.

The TSSAC Chair thanked all members for their term on the TSSAC, and invited them to reapply when the recruitment process commences.

The TSSAC acknowledged and thanked Mr Ian Cartright, the standing chair for his years of service and commitment to the TSSAC.

The meeting was closed at 4:55pm AEST.

**Table 1.** Summary of TSSAC 85 recommendations

Agenda Item #	Recommendations
1	The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that TSRA develop a discussion paper, setting out the suggested process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to put forward possible research priorities, particularly for fisheries not managed by the RAGs and working groups.
3	The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that criteria 5 should add “in the region” after Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to acknowledge supporting and engaging those still residing in the region.
3	The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that criteria 4, 5 and 6 be reviewed to ensure it was clear regarding the language used around stakeholder engagement, communication plans and community consultation, and is consistent between research applications and criteria.
3	The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that criteria 4, 5 and 6 be reviewed to ensure it was clear regarding the language used around stakeholder engagement, communication plans and community consultation, and is consistent between research applications and criteria.
4	The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that advice be sought from the TRLRAG, on possible long-term strategies for this fishery, that may be able to reduce costs of this assessment, such as less frequent assessments, but maintaining annual surveys, or other alternative models.
4	The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> providing information in the Minute to the delegate, regarding the TSSAC trying to balance funding limits while maximising benefits to the communities in the Torres Strait, and as such suggest some fisheries (such as TRL) review their harvest strategies, to better assess this balance when making recommendations.

Agenda Item #	Recommendations
4	TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the TSSAC secretariat (AFMA) further consider rules around IP for TSSAC research projects, noting that caution should be made with any intellectual property being granted which would inhibit clean data or any research output being withheld from AFMA and other PZJA agencies.
4.7	<p>The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> a priority order for the seven research projects for funding. Once TSSAC funding is finalised, projects are recommended to be funded in this order:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TSPF Stock assessment update.</li> <li>2. Fishery independent survey, stock assessment, and Recommended Biological Catch calculations for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery 2025-2028.</li> <li>3. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery: Coral Trout and Spanish Mackerel biological sampling 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28.</li> <li>4. Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery: unknown project to meet needs of the WTO.</li> <li>5. Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery: Stock assessment modelling of prickly redfish in the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery.</li> <li>6. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery: Spanish Mackerel stock assessment, including an appraisal of multi-year TAC-setting.</li> <li>7. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Coral Trout Catch Rate Standardisation.</li> </ol> <p>4.7.2 The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that the finfish biological sampling project be supported for one year initially, rather than three, while the FFRA complete work in the first year, to provide more detailed advice on how many samples need to be collected, how and where (for spatial representation) to determine the power and requirement for continuing the sampling annually.</p> <p>4.7.3 The TSSAC <b>NOTED</b> that the BDM broadscale survey proposal as presented is not suitable for funding, given both the calibre of the proposal, and uncertainties raised around the cost of the budget compared to its objective to meeting the condition of the WTO recommendation for the fishery.</p> <p>4.7.4 The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that AFMA engage the HCRA, and DCCEW to further discuss current and new work in the BDM fishery, including the warrior reef surveys, and whether this may have influence on the WTO conditions.</p>



Agenda Item #	Recommendations
	4.7.5 The TSSAC <b>RECOMMENDED</b> a new BDM scope be developed, if this project is still required following DCCEEW engagement. The proposal should be as cost effective as possible in meeting the WTO condition. This scope should be re-release for project proposals to be assessed at the August 2025 TSSAC meeting.

**Table 2.** Actions from TSSAC 84 and progress against actions from past TSSAC meetings.

Action	Action item	Lead Member
<b>85.1</b>	TSRA to develop a discussion paper, setting out the suggested process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to put forward possible research priorities, particularly for fisheries not managed by the RAGs and working groups.	TSRA
<b>85.2</b>	Assessment Criteria 5 should add “in the region” after Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to acknowledge supporting and engaging those still residing in the region.	TSSAC Secretariat
<b>85.3</b>	TSSAC executive officer to review criteria 4, 5 and 6 to ensure it was clear regarding the language used around stakeholder engagement, communication plans and community consultation, and is consistent between research applications and criteria.	TSSAC Secretariat
<b>85.4</b>	TSSAC secretariat and scientific members to further refine evaluation criteria before next funding round.	TSSAC secretariat and scientific members

<b>85.6</b>	provide feedback to RAG regarding possible different models for sampling and assessments in the TRL fishery to reduce costs.	AFMA
<b>85.7</b>	Provide feedback to the delegate regarding budget constraints and a suggestion for reviewing some stock assessments in an attempt to balance costs and benefits.	AFMA
<b>85.8</b>	Further consider rules around IP for TSSAC research projects, noting that caution should be made with any intellectual property being granted which would inhibit clean data or any research output being withheld from AFMA and other PZJA agencies.	TSSAC secretariat (AFMA) and TSSAC scientific members
<b>85.9</b>	Send a link to the bycatch and discard workplan to TSSAC members.	AFMA
<b>85.10</b>	Consider providing information on the quantum of the species caught on a yearly basis in bycatch for the TSPF. This can be reported back to the next meeting.	AFMA
<b>85.11</b>	AFMA to work with the HCRA, and DCCEE as required, to discuss the current work in the BDM Fisheries that may meet the needs of the WTO condition, and develop a new scope for a project that would meet the requirement of the WTO in the most cost effective way possible.	
<b>85.12</b>	Put together some questions for a discussion paper for tabling at the next meeting relating to management of data and IP in TSSAC funded research projects.	Dr Newman and Dr Welsford

